DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 057 922 24 PS 005 328

AUTHOR Katz, Lilian G.
TITLE Developmental Stages of Preschool Teachers.
INSTITUTION ERIC Clearinghouse on Early Childhood Education, Urbana, Ill.
SPONS AGENCY National Center for Educational Communication (DHEW/OE), Washington, D.C. Division of Information Resources.
PUB DATE Jan 72
CONTRACT OEC-0-70-2623(519)
NOTE 11p.

EDRS PRICE MF-$0.65 HC-$3.29
DESCRIPTORS Beginning Teachers; *Developmental Tasks; Inservice Teacher Education; *Preschool Teachers; Preservice Education; Teacher Characteristics; *Teacher Education; *Teacher Educators; Teacher Experience; Teacher Improvement; *Teaching Models

ABSTRACT

Four dimensions of training for preschool teaching are suggested in this paper: (1) developmental stages of the teacher; (2) training needs of each stage; (3) location of the training; and (4) timing of training. The growth of preschool teachers generally occurs in stages associated with survival, consolidation, renewal, and maturity. Training needs of teachers change as they gain experience over time and move through the stages. The location and timing of training appropriate for the teacher in a given situation must be flexible. The location of training should be moved as the teacher develops. At the beginning of the new teacher's career, training resources must be taken to her. Later on, as the teacher moves past the survival stage, training can move toward the college campus. The timing of training should be shifted so that more training is available to the teacher on the job instead of before it. Experience alone seems insufficient to direct a teacher's growth and learning. As part of her role a teacher trainer should try to make sure that teachers, especially beginning teachers, have informed and interpreted experiences. (Author/WY)

PA-24
OEC-0-70-2623(SP)

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH,
EDUCATION & WELFARE
OFFICE OF EDUCATION
THIS DOCUMENT HAS BEEN REPRODUCED EXACTLY AS RECEIVED FROM THE PERSON OR ORGANIZATION ORIGINATING IT. POINTS OF VIEW OR OPINIONS STATED DO NOT NECESSARILY REPRESENT OFFICIAL OFFICE OF EDUCATION POSITION OR POLICY.

ED057922

DEVELOPMENTAL STAGES OF PRESCHOOL TEACHERS

Lilian G. Katz, Ph.D.
Director
ERIC/ECE

Educational Resources Information Center
Clearinghouse on Early Childhood Education
805 West Pennsylvania Avenue
Urbana, Illinois 61801

January 1972

PS 005328

DEVELOPMENTAL STAGES OF PRESCHOOL TEACHERS[1]

Preschool teachers can generally be counted on to talk about developmental needs and stages when they discuss children. It may be equally meaningful to think of teachers themselves as having developmental sequences in their professional growth patterns. The purpose of the present discussion is to outline the tasks and associated training needs of each suggested developmental stage, and to consider the implications for the timing and location of training efforts.

It seems reasonable to suggest that there may be at least four developmental stages for teachers. Individual teachers may vary greatly in the length of time spent in each of the four stages outlined below and schematized in Figure 1.

(Insert Figure 1 about here).

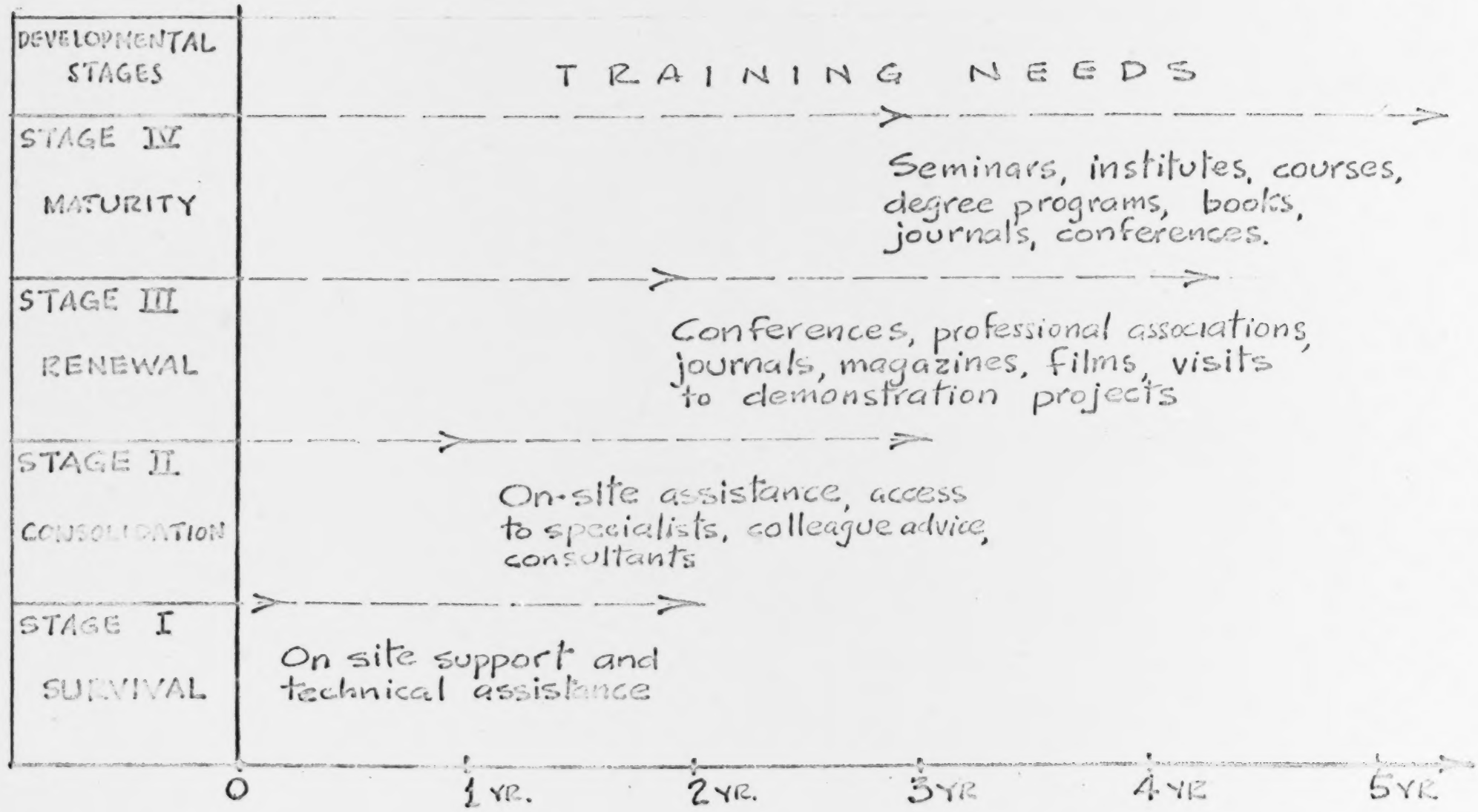
STAGE I - SURVIVAL

Developmental Tasks

During this stage, which may last throughout the first full year of teaching, the teacher's main concern is whether or not

---

[1]This paper was produced pursuant to a contract with the Office of Education, U.S. Department of Health, Education and Welfare. Contractors undertaking such projects under Government sponsorship are encouraged to express freely their professional judgment. Points of view or opinions stated do not, therefore, necessarily represent official government position or policy.



STAGES OF DEVELOPMENT & TRAINING NEEDS OF PRESCHOOL TEACHERS

FIGURE 1.

she can survive. This preoccupation with survival may be expressed in terms like these: "Can I get through the day in one piece? Without losing a child? Can I make it until the end of the week - the next vacation? Can I really do this kind of work day after day? Will I be accepted by my colleagues?" Such questions are well expressed in Ryan's (2) enlightening collection of accounts of first year teaching experiences.

The first full impact of responsibility for a group of immature but vigorous young children (to say nothing of encounters with their parents) inevitably provokes teacher anxieties. The discrepancy between anticipated successes and classroom realities intensifies feelings of inadequacy and unpreparedness.

Training Needs

During this period the teacher needs support, understanding, encouragement, reassurance, comfort and guidance. She needs instruction in specific skills and insight into the complex causes of behavior--all of which must be provided on the classroom site. On-site trainers may be senior staff members, advisors, consultants or program assistants. Training must be constantly and readily available from someone who knows both the trainee and her teaching situation well. The trainer should have enough time and flexibility to be on call as needed by the trainee. Schedules of periodic visits which have been arranged in advance cannot be counted on to coincide with trainees' crises. Cook and Mack (3) describe the British pattern of on-site training

given to teachers by their headmasters (principals). Armington (4) also describes the way advisors can meet these teacher needs.

STATE II - CONSOLIDATION

Developmental Tasks

By the end of the first year the teacher has usually decided that she is capable of surviving. She is now ready to consolidate the overall gains made during the first stage and to differentiate specific tasks and skills to be mastered next. During Stage II, teachers usually begin to focus on individual problem children and problem situations. This focus may take the form of looking for answers to such questions as: "How can I help a clinging child? How can I help a particular child who does not seem to be learning?"

During Stage I, the neophyte acquires a baseline of information about what young children are like and what to expect of them. By Stage II the teacher is beginning to identify individual children whose behavior departs from the pattern of most of the children she knows.

Training Needs

During this stage, on-site help continues to be valuable. A trainer can help the teacher through mutual exploration of a problem. Take, for example, the case of a young teacher from a day care center

who was eager to get help and expressed her problem in the question, "How should I deal with a clinging child?" An on-site trainer can, of course, observe the teacher and child *in situ* and arrive at suggestions and tentative solution strategies fairly quickly. However, without firsthand knowledge of the child and context, an extended give-and-take conversation between teacher and trainer may be the best way for the trainer to help the teacher to interpret her experience and move towards a solution of the problem. The trainer might ask the teacher such questions as, "What have you done so far? Give an example of some experiences with this particular child during this week. When you did such and such, how did the child respond?" (See Katz (7) for some examples of problem-treatment strategies).

Also, in this stage the need for information about specific children or problem children suggests that learning to use a wider range of resources is needed. Psychologists, social and health workers and other specialists can strengthen the teacher's skills and knowledge at this time. Exchanges of information and ideas with more experienced colleagues may help teachers master the developmental tasks of this period. Opportunities to share feelings with other teachers in the same stage of development may help to reduce some of the teacher's sense of personal inadequacy and frustration.

PS 005328

STAGE III - RENEWAL

Developmental Tasks

Often, during the third or fourth year of teaching, the teacher begins to tire of doing the same old things. She starts to ask more questions about new developments in the field: "Who is doing what? Where? What are some of the new materials, techniques, approaches and ideas? It may be that what the teacher has been doing for each annual crop of children has been quite adequate for them, but that she herself finds the recurrent Valentine cards, Easter bunnies and pumpkin cutouts insufficiently interesting! If it is true that a teacher's own interest or commitment to the projects and activities she provides for children contributes to their educational value, then her need for renewal and refreshment should be taken seriously.

Training Needs

During this stage, teachers find it especially rewarding to meet colleagues from different programs on both formal and informal occasions. Teachers in this developmental stage are particularly receptive to experiences in regional and national conferences and workshops and profit from membership in professional associations and participation in their meetings. Teachers are now widening the scope of their reading, scanning numerous magazines and journals, and viewing films. Perhaps during this period they may be ready to take a close look at their own classroom teaching through video-taping.

This is also a time when teachers welcome opportunities to visit other classes, programs, and demonstration projects.

Perhaps it is at this stage that the teacher center has the greatest potential value (See Silberman (5) and Bailey (6).) Teacher centers are places where teachers can gather together to help each other learn or re-learn skills, techniques and methods, to exchange ideas and to organize special workshops. From time to time specialists in curriculum, child growth or any other area of concern which teachers identify are invited to the center to meet with teachers.

STAGE IV - MATURITY

Developmental Tasks

Maturity may be reached by some teachers within three years, by others in five or more. The teacher at this stage has come to terms with herself as a teacher. She now has enough perspective to begin to ask deeper and more abstract questions, such as: "What are my historical and philosophical roots? What is the nature of growth and learning? How are educational decisions made? Can schools change societies? Is teaching a profession?" Perhaps she has asked these questions before. But with the experience she has now gained, the questions represent a more meaningful search for insight, perspective and realism.

Training Needs

Throughout maturity, teachers need an opportunity to participate in conferences and seminars and perhaps to work towards a degree. Mature teachers welcome the chance to read widely and to interact with educators working on many problem areas on many different levels. Training sessions and conference events which Stage II teachers enjoy may be very tiresome to the Stage IV teacher. (Similarly, introspective and searching discussion seminars enjoyed by Stage IV teachers may lead to restlessness and irritability among the beginners of Stage I.)

SUMMARY

In the above outline, four dimensions of training for preschool teaching have been suggested: (1) developmental stages of the teacher; (2) training needs of each stage; (3) location of the training; and (4) timing of training.

Developmental Stage of the Teacher. It is useful to think of the growth of preschool teachers (and perhaps other teachers, also) as occurring in stages, linked very generally to experience gained over time.

Training Needs of Each Stage. The training needs of teachers change as experience occurs. For example, the issues dealt with in the traditional social foundations courses do not seem to address themselves to the early survival problems which are critical to the inexperienced. However, for the maturing teacher, those same issues

may help to deepen her understanding of the total complex context in which she is trying to be effective.

Location of Training. The location of training should be moved as the teacher develops. At the beginning of the new teacher's career, training resources must be taken to her so that training can be responsive to the particular (and possibly unique) developmental tasks and working situation the trainee faces in her classroom. Later on as the teacher moves on past the survival stage, training can move toward the college campus.

Timing of Training. The timing of training should be shifted so that more training is available to the teacher on the job than before it. Many teachers say that their preservice education has had only a minor influence on what they do day to day in their classrooms, which suggests that strategies acquired before employment will often not be retrieved under pressure of concurrent forces and factors in the actual job situation.

However, even though it is often said that experience is the best teacher, we cannot assume that experience teaches what the new trainee should learn. To direct this learning, to try to make sure that the beginning teacher has informed and interpreted experience should be one of the major roles of the teacher trainer.

References

1. Katz, L. G. & Weir, M. K. Help for Preschool Teachers: A Proposal. ERIC Clearinghouse on Early Childhood Education, Urbana, Ill. 1969.

2. Ryan, Kevin (Ed.) Don't Smile Until Christmas: Accounts of the First Year of Teaching. U. of Chicago Press, Chicago, Ill. 1970.

3. Cook, A. & Mack, M. The Headteacher's Role. New York: Citation Press, 1971.

4. Armington, D. A Plan for Continuing Growth. Educational Development Center, Newton, Mass. Mimeo n:d.

5. Silberman, A. A Santa's Workshop for Teachers. American Education, v7 n10, Dec 1971.

6. Bailey, S. K. Teachers' Centers: A British First. Phi Delta Kappan, v53 n3, Nov 1971.

7. Katz, L. G. Condition with Caution: Think Thrice Before Conditioning. ERIC Clearinghouse on Early Childhood Education, Urbana, Ill. 1971.